

PSFC Executive Committee Meeting Notes

2.5.14

Participants – In-Person:

Carrie Byron, EPA
Rick Parkin, EPA
Mark Carey, FEMA
Mark Riebau, FEMA
Amy Lieb, USFS
Sharon Loper, FEMA
Barry Gall, FEMA
Tom McDowell, USFWS
Jennifer Eberlien, USFS
Sharon Love, FHWA
John Graves, FEMA

Participants - Phone:

Reta Laford, Olympic National Forest
Robin Slate, NRCS
Evan Lewis, Corps
Frank Shipley, USGS
Rick Noble, NRCS
Renee Wallis, Navy
Bill Labiosa, USGS
Elizabeth Babcock, NOAA

FEMA Presentation

- Sharon Loper, Deputy Regional Administrator for FEMA Region X, welcomed the group to their facility on behalf of Regional Administrator RA Ken Murphy who is in DC and was unavailable to meet us himself. She then provided an overview of their region and the current issues it faces.
- Region X – Is one of 10 regions and encompasses WA, OR, ID, and AK.
- Considered a “Donor Region” – there are typically not as many medium-size disasters here and so they donate professional staff to other regions for floods, environmental concerns, and deployments in the Southeastern United States
- Focus on preparedness, response, recovery, mitigation

Current issues in Region 10 –

- 3 disasters in Alaska recently – Big (effort in Central AK due to ice melt breakup causing flooding in hub communities) – 2 years of work getting them back up online
- Small (one-borough event)
- Medium (storm on the Coast and in Fairbanks)
- Challenges in accessing small communities, also weather challenges during winter
- Ramping up for large exercise in AK – on 50th anniversary of largest earthquake in the US in March. A drill to rehearse their response to a large earthquake in large remote community
- Sandy recovery improvement act stated that federally recognized tribes can now request disaster declaration from the President, they don’t need to go through states. FEMA is working to build mechanisms to support that process. Major effort to gear up for that.
- FEMA looking at workforce in a new way. Every employee is an emergency manager just in case needed. So everyone needs training on disaster management in addition to skills they originally

bring to the agency. The agency is good at responding to large events, need to get up to speed on catastrophic event.

- FEMA is actively engaged in working on health of environment. They have been doing buyouts of homes in floodplains which are then required not to rebuild on that land
- Also working on NFIP for ESA implementation
- Engaged in PSFC at all 3 levels
- Mark R. – introduced Barry Gall from FEMA who gave a presentation in relation to implementation of National Flood Insurance Program
- Barry Gall – *See presentation that was circulated prior to 2/5/14 meeting*

Updates on PSFC business items:

- MOU – there has been a hang up in getting this signed as one agency may be requesting a change to the effective date. Stay tuned for details and refrain from circulating further at the moment
- Executive meeting schedule – The Executive Committee's doodle poll resulted in the selection of the 1st Wednesday of the 2nd month of each quarter for their meetings. If any agencies are interested in hosting in the future please let Carrie Byron know.

Path Forward Strategies

Strategy 1 – setting the example on federal lands

- Amy Lieb, USFS, presented an update on how this work is progressing.
- The workgroup consists of USFWS, USFS, NPS, Navy, Army
- All of Path Forward movement has been to address TRAR. This addresses salmon, not all fish. So this is really about salmon passage barriers, there are many more out there for other species.
- Last summer identified that effort was similar to state's culvert case – only limited to upstream migration barriers for salmon, not dikes and other structures.
- Identified 91 barriers on federal lands
- Next need to prioritize, try to obtain funding to replace & remove culverts.
- Vision is to prioritize across jurisdictions.
- Also need to involve tribes in the discussion
- Asking questions of whether they can integrate Federal data with State data by working with local lead entities.
- Have obtained \$65,000 to date in grant money to go out and take next steps to fill out inventory. They may know of barriers but not necessarily know upstream habitat, cost for replacement, type of structure, lat/long, etc.
- Now that they have money, need to decide what protocol to use. First need to assess exactly what data they need/have.
- Grant applications have been a joint effort between USFWS, USFS, NPS.
- Meeting with state next week to talk about collaboration.
- Rick P. - EPA might be able to contribute some NEP funds to the effort.
- What do we see tribal involvement looking like? Can we request a forum with tribes as they can with us? Tribes have been very willing to work with FS to help get funding.
- Jennifer – to go further we need tribal engagement. The idea of having some kind of forum or engagement is really the next step.

- Robin - wondered if they had looked at State of our Watersheds report – answer is they had not specifically.
- Amy – how can other agencies contribute to the plan? Maybe a workshop or future meeting on talking about that.
- Rick N. – NRCS very interested in opportunities to focus funds on fish passage barrier removal and habitat improvement. They can't work on federal lands but can coordinate activities.
- Renee – is there a path forward right now for getting tribes involved? No explicit plan. Need ideas and a direction of what to do.
- Rick N. – tribes might want to get into areas of technical criteria for prioritization.
- Amy – talking with state next week to get details of state's criteria
- Reta – The PSFC used to meet with tribes on a regular basis to discuss other things. Haven't heard of us talking holistically with the tribes in a while. Could maybe have a forum where we meet with them to talk about other things.
- Robin – NWIFC has an annual habitat forum that is well attended by tribes that we could potentially plug into This is in the spring.
- *Robin will find out when that is and let us know
- Barry – regardless of when data is available, once it is in WRIA plans it can be more visible. This would be helpful for them.
- Agree we should continue to pursue this strategy and thanks to Amy and the workgroup for all their hard work!

Strategy 3 - Restoration of degraded habitat areas in PS

- Elizabeth Babcock, NOAA presented the status of this work
- *Elizabeth will send out Jen Steger's paper to EC
- Nothing has happened since November since
- Concept is to get more federal agencies to work together to combine funding and priorities to identify geographic areas of mutual interest we can be more effective with funding and regulation than we would in isolation.
- For NOAA – trying to have a closer relationship between NMFS and restoration center. Jen S. leads the restoration center so this is a good fit.
- Work group is Jen, Elizabeth, and Steve L. from NOAA, Carrie Byron/EPA, Sherre Copeland/NRCS, Jay Davis/USFWS, Lori Morris/Corps, Rick Cook/BIA, Laurie Lee Jenkins/NPS, Mark Carey/FEMA.
- Focus is identifying barriers to success and early actions.
- Jen has done some of this work in relation to her other work in Puget Sound.
- This provides a clear opportunity to line up with the state and their restoration funding effort
- Washington State is spending ~\$250 million to restore PS, and last year there was an additional \$70 million.
- Leveraging federal programs and aligning with state funding is a good idea. If we can do that over next year or so it will increase our ability to sustain funding levels and spend funding more effectively.
- The 1st phase is identifying projects.
- The 2nd phase is coordinated federal leadership to get multiple benefits.
- The 3rd phase is to respond to findings and refine mechanisms to respond to opportunities in 1 and 2.
- Preliminary steps we could take to respond include:
 - Federal funding cost effectiveness
 - Regulatory effectiveness

- Ability to extend state spending
- Whole life-cycle funding
- Ability to respond to large project timing
- One-stop shop for restoration
- 2 existing opportunities identified – coordinated investments and multiple benefits pilot
- Next steps: get feedback on exiting draft and convene workgroup by phone to discuss.
- For a workshop – this topic is appropriate for a workshop at some point but not there yet. Group should get together and explore what that would look like.
- Tom – wondered if PSNERP projects on this list as well, Elizabeth wasn't sure.
- Jen has a good map illustrating projects and Elizabeth can get that from her.
- Tom – The state/Corps process may have stalled out at the national level and there is some frustration with that. A big opportunity may be floundering.
- Rick P. - EPA may have funding to contribute to these efforts.
- Evan – working internally on PSNERP, recognize frustration. We are getting to point where we should have reconciliation quickly – news may come out in near future on this.
- Mark C. – FEMA working on multiple benefit projects, including floodplains by design. Ecology got \$\$ for multiple benefit floodplain projects. FEMA would like to be involved in the future on this.

Strategy #2 – Effective Regulation of Shoreline Armoring

- Carrie Byron discussed the status of this work
- It has really moved beyond the issue paper and morphed into an example of a potential issue for policy elevation.
- EPA, the Corps, and NOAA are working to frame up two briefing papers – one on the Corps permitting and mitigation processes and one on the issue of the Corps line of jurisdiction.
- Staff are outlining issues and clarifying points of disagreement and where we can work together more in the region to resolve these before elevating and mitigation.
- The permit issue needs to be worked more in the region, but the jurisdiction issue may be ready for elevation.
- Elizabeth - NOAA recommends using Highest Astronomical Tide vs Mean Higher High Water as the line of jurisdiction. This creates a federal nexus in a broader area so NOAA can consult.
- These conversations are ongoing.
- For the Corps the Northwest Division has the lead for jurisdiction issue, the Seattle District has lead for NWP.
- Evan – need alignment with different levels before arriving at a different path forward.
- There is a meeting on 2/10 between EPA, NOAA, and Corps Division and District Leadership to talk through these issues.
- Since this issue is actively being worked through other angles it is probably not ready for a workshop, but other agencies will keep the PSFC in the loop on progress of this effort.

Policy Elevation Process

- *Please see email for EPA's Deputy Administrator Bob Perciasepe and attached proposed policy elevation process draft document that was circulated with meeting materials.*
- Rick Parkin - EPA has been heavily involved with development of this paper and so has the Corps and other agencies.
- The idea is to agree on a policy elevation process for issues we are unable to resolve in the region related to TRAR.

- Meeting of deputy-level leadership has been discussed.
- EPA will let folks know if issue elevation process gets decided on.
- There is some question as to whether or not tribes can trigger issue elevation.
- Every agency should go through their own chain to give feedback on the draft.

Riparian Buffer conversations

- Rick Parkin – this is about TRAR request that agencies that fund improvements on agricultural the land should require that landowner buffer property with salmon buffers.
- Update on our history of working with riparian buffer requirements – EPA conditioned NEP grants to require use of NOAA buffers when accepting funding. Lots of concern among groups that this may not be a very effective way to get adequate buffers on the land because landowners may not sign up.
- Implementation of buffers has been challenging.
- There is a simultaneous effort at the state level by WDFW, ECY, others to look at the science and come up with new recommendations for buffer size.
- Dennis has been working with the “7 Directors” on this issue (which now might be up to 8 adding in PSP)
 - How do we repackage our agencies authorities to get adequate buffers on the ground and get ag industry participation to do that?
 - All agencies in agreement this is something we need to take on.
 - Fed agencies asked for a joint fed/state meeting, we are hoping they will choose to do that
 - First meeting needs to be tied into ongoing efforts.
- Dennis is also interested in an acquisition/easement program rather than something just asking them to voluntarily enroll.
- Will discuss that concept and turn to efforts in that area.
- Barry – This seems focused on ag lands – are we talking about going beyond that?
- Rick P. – right now centered on ag lands. Might eventually spread
- Amy – clarified that this started b/c Swinomish raised this issue on ag lands directly.
- Rick and Josh presented on this topic at the Salmon Recovery Council. Local governments were very interested and concerned that it would affect them. It could, to the extent they have ag lands in their jurisdictions.
- Rick N. – recognizes there are great opportunities to implement buffers on ag lands. Many perspectives on how that should be conducted. Discussed NRCS’ salmon program and how they were unable to put these buffers on these programs. Hard to implement on working lands. Many NGOs were willing and some projects in tidelands applied but mainly they had to go out for funding again.
- In the farm bill notes there are concerns by managers about buffers from NRCS. Concerns that state and local governments are seeking to impose stricter buffers than NRCS. Stress that there is a desire for NRCS to continue to implement their own buffers.
- Elizabeth – Rick’s point very important. Roylene has tried to do new and creative things with program even given more stringent buffers but her agency said she couldn’t use NOAA buffers, had to use FOTG. These are not incompatible. Still questions for best path to implement funds. Roylene now even more constrained than she was initially.
- Jennifer E. – sat in a presentation by Tulalip, Snohomish County, NRCS w/ Butch Blazer on Sustainable Lands Strategy. They are working with ag owners to soften permit requirements and get wetlands protections. Very impressive strategy that is ready to go after a long time working.

This is working on a net gain. Focused on ag lands but next will look at forest lands and pull in forest service.

- Rick P.– that is a model that has been raised to others. Very impressive. One of their tenants is you need to make this a win/win.

Upcoming meetings

2/19 - Meeting between regional leadership and key tribal leaders.

USFS has been asked to pull together some accomplishment data for that, to show how as a department they are working on moving together and do a better job of telling the USDA story.

Rick N. – Sherre has been providing information on that too. Other agencies may also be asked to prepare materials.

Other

- Tom – What is our role in monitoring progress? Is there a gant chart of efforts and what people proejct we are going to get done? It would be good to state what is getting done, what isn't getting done, and why. Can we point to success and progress?
- Others thought this was a good idea but it might prove challenging to implement and staff this effort.
- Amy – USFS framed up a document saying what we have done and what next steps are. She used tribes own language to frame what we have done. There were 11 issues tribes framed up – has developed a chart of how their agency is
- Rick - We could look back at the May 2013 letter and our response to it.
- *Steering committee can discuss this issue and make recommendation to execs

Next Meeting – 5/7/2013, 9am -12pm, Location TBD